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... WILL POT BE AVAILABLE AT LCBO STORES TOMORROW? 'MAKES SENSE' TO WYNNE P. 4

EXPRESSWAY

More green for the Gardiner

Chris Bateman
For Metro | Toronto

The long-awaited demolition of an aging Gardiner Expressway off-ramp might make Toronto's waterfront a little greener.

The spiral ramp at York Street and Queens Quay, which was built in the mid-1960s, is due to come down next year as part of a plan to improve the streetscape on Bay and Yonge streets.

Removing the steel and concrete structure will free up almost a hectare of prime real estate the city has long planned to turn into a public space, like a park.

It's something people like Dave Harvey long to hear.

"Our definition of a good park is one that meets the community needs," said Harvey, executive director of Park People, an advocacy group that worked on the Under Gardiner project. "With so many people living down there and the growing number of children, there is a need for new playgrounds and off-leash dog areas."

The current off-ramp structure carries two lanes of highway traffic from Rees Street to the intersection of York and Harbour streets, via a tight spiral near Queens Quay.

The new, shorter ramp due to be built starting in 2016 will consist of three lanes and feed directly onto Harbour Street at Simcoe Street — a layout that may require the city to expropriate land.

Harvey said infill parks like this are vital in Toronto's increasingly busy downtown core.

"In these dense neighbourhoods you really need top-quality park spaces because they are used so intensively," he said. "The city is open to neat new ideas, so it's a really exciting time for parks in the city."

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Your essential daily news

Slavery, child labour tied to global shrimp supply chains, including Wal-Mart, Red Lobster. **Business**

$11.4 BILLION (AND STILL GROWING)

Toronto's 2015 operating budget. Next year's budget is expected to be even larger.

What time is it? Budget time. On Tuesday, Toronto city council will begin the annual process of setting its fiscal priorities and finding the money – or not – to pay for them.

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

New city manager Peter Wallace has been blunt in his assessment of the city's finances, claiming there's not enough revenue coming in to pay for $23 billion in unfunded capital projects.

Mayor John Tory recently announced a plan to hike property taxes to pay for much-needed transit and housing initiatives. However, the plan doesn't come into effect until 2017, meaning council must find other ways to fill this year's budget gap.

Here are some of the debates to watch as the city decides what to do with its wallet — and yours.

Transit

Faced with a projected $53-million shortfall, the TTC board voted in November to increase cash fares by 25 cents, while also bumping up the cost of tickets and tokens by a dime. The new fares take effect Jan. 1. However, the expanded fare revenue won't cover the full shortfall, meaning the TTC will be asking the city to increase its subsidy. In 2015, TTC received $483 million from the city, up from $440 million the year before. Council will decide whether to boost the subsidy again. If not, further fare increases could be ahead.

Poverty

Toronto is grappling with rising income inequality and holds the dubious honour of being the child poverty capital of Canada. As a result, there was much back-patting at City Hall this fall after councillors adopted a sweeping plan to reduce poverty in the city. However, the test of councillors' enthusiasm for poverty reduction will come when they're asked to pay up. Last year's budget set aside $26 million for anti-poverty efforts, but according to Civic Action, the price tag for tackling poverty is closer to $75 million.

Last month, the police board approved a budget increase of 2.76 per cent. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Policing

Although Tory asked city departments to trim their budgets by two per cent through "efficiencies," he — with the rest of the Toronto Police Services Board — voted in favour of a 2016 police budget that does the opposite. Last month, the board unanimously approved a budget increase of 2.76 per cent, pushing the policing price tag past $1 billion for the first time in the city's history. Roughly 90 per cent of the budget goes to salaries and benefits. Of course, the budget still needs the nod from council, and with a recent KPMG report suggesting savings could be found by cutting the number of frontline officers, expect this debate to be as lively as a G20 protest.

Housing

Tory has admitted Toronto Community Housing is in "crisis." Many of the organization's buildings date back to the 1960s and '70s, leading to a staggering $2.6-billion repair backlog. No matter how you slice it, fixing those buildings, while also finding a way to house the 95,000 families on the TCH waitlist will cost money. The general consensus amongst Toronto politicians is that housing is also a provincial and federal issue. However, other levels of government have traditionally been unwilling to come to the table unless the city steps up to the plate first.

These bricks have fallen from a TCH building on Eglinton Avenue. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

EXPLAINED

HOW REVENUE TOOLS WORK

City manager Peter Wallace has promised to offer council some potential revenue tools that could help plug the hole in the 2016 budget.

The prior council voted down revenue increases in 2013, but this year they'll be forced to either find more money, or cancel projects and cut services. Wallace has yet to hint at the proposals, saying only they'll be "incremental." These are some options.

Higher taxes: Despite recent hikes, Toronto still has property tax rates far lower than other GTA cities. But Mayor John Tory just announced a tax hike for 2017 and it's unlikely he'd go back to the well so soon.

User fees: Toronto has announced higher fees for garbage and waste programs, and it's possible the city could find extra cash by doing the same for things like recreation programs and other services. The now-defunct vehicle registration tax is an example of a user fee that brought in about $60 million a year before Rob Ford cancelled it.

Sales tax: Some councillors have expressed support for a municipal sales tax. A one per cent sales tax in Toronto would bring in an estimated $500 million. However the city would need permission from the province first.

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Beer is here, but wine must wait

ALCOHOL REFORM

Vino deal for grocery stores more complex, says insider

Six-packs of beer will be sold in the first Ontario supermarkets on Tuesday, but wine sales are not yet ready to be uncorked.

Premier Kathleen Wynne is set to buy suds at the Loblaws on Leslie Street near Eastern Avenue on Tuesday morning for the benefit of the cameras.

Wynne's symbolic purchase will realize, partially, a dream broached by former premier David Peterson in 1985 when he promised beer and wine in corner stores but failed to get the measure passed in the legislature.

Some 30 years later, however, selling wine in supermarkets remains a challenge in restrictive Ontario — even though neighbouring jurisdictions like Quebec and New York have long enjoyed liberalized liquor laws.

While Ed Clark, Wynne's privatization czar, was able to develop the blueprint for selling beer in grocery stores, he and his team still need more time to complete a road map for wine sales.

Sources said Clark's plan will not be completed until early in the new year.

"It's a lot more complicated than beer," said one insider, explaining that negotiating with the Beer Store, the private 448-store chain that had enjoyed a de facto monopoly since 1927, was more straightforward than dealing with the various interests in the global wine industry.

Clark's work is tricky because there are existing privately owned wine kiosks now operating inside supermarkets.

Those 268 licensees — the Wine Rack and the Wine Shop — enjoy "grandfathered" licences exempt from the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. They are permitted to sell quality VQA wine made here by a few wineries as well as foreign-blended bulk wine bottled in Ontario.

Richard Linley, president of the Wine Council of Ontario, said the winemakers "are disappointed that yet another deadline for a plan to expand access to Ontario VQA wines will be missed."

"We will continue to grow if the government gives Ontarians the chance to support their local wine industry in a modernized retail landscape — with shopping options that give customers more choice and convenience," said Linley,

Tuesday's beer announcement will be the most significant change in generations.

It will herald that up to 60 locations will be authorized to sell six-packs within the next two weeks. Cases of 24 will continue to be sold only at the Beer Store, but 12-packs will be available at some LCBO outlets.

By May 2017, there will be 150 Ontario supermarkets selling beer, eventually rising to a maximum 450 of the province's 1,500 grocery stores.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Six-packs of beer will appear in the first Ontario supermarkets on Tuesday. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MARIJUANA

Medicinal users wary of LCBO monopoly

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Some marijuana users say they don't want to see their medicine sold alongside alcohol at the LCBO, putting them at odds with Premier Kathleen Wynne.

It "makes a lot of sense" for the LCBO to be responsible for selling marijuana when the federal Liberal government follows through with its election promise to legalize pot, Wynne said Monday.

"The liquor-distribution mechanism that we have in place at LCBO is very well-suited to putting in place the social-responsibility aspects that would need to be in place," the premier said at Queen's Park.

The proposal left customers buzzing at Chris Cardozo's Toronto Holistic Cannaboids dispensary in Kensington Market.

"As medical patients, they do not want to see that, not at all," Cardozo said.

He would be fine with the LCBO selling marijuana for recreational users but wants medical users to have access to the advice they currently get from dispensaries and those who've long held Health Canada medical-marijuana licences. Wynne didn't distinguish between medical and recreational marijuana in her comments.

"The LCBO doesn't know anything about marijuana; they know about liquor," Cardozo said. "But I'm a medical-marijuana user myself, and so is everyone in my shop here. They know what works and what doesn't."

Chris Cardozo, who owns a dispensary in Kensington Market, isn't fully behind Premier Kathleen Wynne's proposal that the LCBO handle marijuana sales if it's legalized. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Selling medical marijuana at the liquor store would be particularly problematic for patients using marijuana to combat alcohol dependency, he added. "That's their choice of medicine to get them off of that substance — and they don't want to go to the LCBO to pick up their medicine."

In response to Wynne's comments, LCBO spokeswoman Christine Bujold said that if the time comes when recreational marijuana is legalized, her agency would "take direction from the provincial government" on its role.

The federal government's promise to legalize, regulate and restrict access to marijuana would presumably take criminals out of the business and bring money into government coffers through taxation.

Queen's Park collected $1.163 billion in tobacco taxes last year and $3 billion in booze taxes — including $1.8 billion from the LCBO, $565 million from beer and wine taxes and more than $600 million in Ontario's share of the harmonized sales tax.

But the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has pointed out that cannabis may not be the panacea for cash-strapped governments, noting total national sales were $4.6 billion in 2012. If the provinces adopt similar levies to Colorado, it would generate about $628 million a year across the country.

WITH FILES FROM TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

SUPPORT

Kathleen Wynne's suggestion that the LCBO has a stake in the pot business is similar to the stance of Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger.

"These are all highly addictive drugs, and we want to make sure Manitobans get the best opportunity to be protected from them," Selinger said three weeks ago. "At the retail level, we would like to do it the way we're doing liquor in Manitoba right now, to make sure it's safe."

Ontario Public Service Employees Union president Warren (Smokey) Thomas has also shown support for the idea.

"If legalization happens, marijuana must be a controlled substance, and no one has more experience retailing controlled substances than the workers at the LCBO," said Thomas, whose union represents LCBO employees, last month.

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EMPLOYMENT

Teachers' unions launch Bill 115 fight

Three years after the McGuinty government upset teachers' unions by imposing a deal and limiting their right to strike, they are fighting back — in court, claiming the move trampled their constitutional rights.

Five unions representing Ontario's public school teachers and staff launched a landmark case in a Toronto courtroom Monday that even presiding Superior Court Justice Tom Lederer called "a big deal." The unions argue that Ontario's controversial "Putting Students First Act," better known as Bill 115, breached unions' constitutional rights to strike as well as collective bargaining.

"The bargaining process, with its give and take, came to a crashing halt when Bill 115 was introduced because the parameters fundamentally impeded it," said lawyer Howard Goldblatt, representing the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). It is challenging the law — which was later repealed — before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice along with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU) and Unifor.

The government stirred up a hornet's nest when it demanded other school worker unions sign deals that were "substantially identical" to the one it negotiated with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), freezing salaries for two years, reducing sick days, forcing staff to take three unpaid days off and putting an end to payouts of unused sick days upon retirement.

"Bill 115 stripped away key benefits that were the product of collective bargaining over many years...and eliminated altogether the right to strike, which is an essential component of the 'freedom of association' guarantee," ETFO's written case argues. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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MONOPOLY

Transit Commission lining up its lawyers

The Toronto Transit Commission is asking its legal department to look into the new uberHop service, offering $5 flat rates for commuters on four routes during weekday rush hours, and see if it violates the TTC's monopoly.

"We'll have our lawyers have a look at this business model, and determine whether it is in contravention of the City of Toronto Act or not, and go from there," said TTC spokesman Brad Ross.

The legislation gives the TTC the right to operate all public transportation services, with a few exceptions such as tour buses, school buses and free shuttle services.

Tracey Cook, the city's head of municipal licensing and standards, added the city is also reviewing uberHop's operations for compliance with existing legislation.

> **We need to make sure that people have efficient, effective and safe services.**
> Premier Kathleen Wynne

Uber's latest service is aimed at residents of the many condo towers that have sprouted up in recent years. With that huge population growth, it is putting pressure on transit, especially on the King Street streetcar, which is the city's busiest route.

UberHop will operate between 7 and 10 a.m., and 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. on weekdays, with dedicated pickup and dropoff spots, usually on side streets, for a flat rate of $5 for each passenger.

The service, which began just last week in Seattle, raises concerns about whether it replaces transit service, since it runs between specific points at specific times.

Municipal lawyer Ron Kanter expects the case could potentially wind up in the courts, leaving it up to a judge to determine whether Uber is violating the TTC's protected monopoly, as set out in the City of Toronto Act.

"It is unclear and uncertain at this time," said Kanter. "It could be argued either way."

He noted that earlier this year, the city lost its injunction application against Uber, with the judge siding with the company that it was not a taxi service, merely relaying messages between prospective passengers and drivers.

"I suspect Uber would make an argument along similar lines (in the latest case)," he said.

Uber has drawn the ire of taxi drivers, who are frustrated with what they see as city hall's inaction. They complain that UberX drivers are unfair competition to an industry that is over-regulated and expensive to operate in.

Mayor John Tory said the city has no intention of shutting down Uber, despite the company's newest service, in defiance of the city's request to halt operations until new regulations are in place.

"The notion of just shutting Uber down — it has 300,000 users plus and 15,000 drivers in Toronto — is not a proposition that is really practical," Tory said Monday after meeting with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Wynne noted the sharing economy is posing challenges to the status quo.

"We need to make sure that people have efficient, effective and safe services as we had in the past."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The new uberHOP shuttle service is designed for those fed up with the crowded 504 King streetcar route. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Good luck disrupting TTC: Shuttle startup

COMPETITION

Line Six hopes uberHOP can make a go of it

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

The founder of a defunct private transit service in Liberty Village is wishing Uber luck as the controversial company tries to succeed where he failed.

Uber will launch its new uberHOP service today, shuttling riders from Liberty Village, Fort York, CityPlace and the Distillery to the financial district and back using existing Uber vehicles.

UberHOP is very similar to Line Six, a crowdsourced community shuttle in Liberty Village started by Taylor Scollon and Brett Chang in 2014. Despite a successful pilot project, the service was ultimately scuttled due to legal concerns.

Line Six was concerned with running afoul of the City of Toronto Act, which grants the TTC a virtual monopoly on public transit services, Chang told Metro earlier this year.

The possibility of a court challenge was too much for the small company to bear, Scollon said Monday, but he believes Uber is better positioned.

"The supply side of the transit problem is the most significant hurdle. We were constrained by the size and cost of the coach shuttle market," Scollon said.

"Uber faces no such constraint as they are using vans already operating on their platform. On the demand side, they have their app on thousands of Torontonians' phones already … not to mention billions of dollars in venture-capital money kicking around for marketing."

Access to transit is still an issue in Liberty Village, and Scollon said uberHOP could provide some relief for residents fed up with crowded rush-hour streetcars.

The legal status of uberHOP remains up in the air. A city spokesperson told Metro they are checking to see if it's in compliance.

Uber maintains the service is similar to the UberPOOL carpooling app, and insists it will not have an impact on TTC ridership.

Mayor John Tory expressed support for uberHOP on Monday, saying laws need to keep pace with changes in technology.

"This is a marketplace response to a reality, which are there are places in the city that are not as well served by public transportation as they need to be," he said.

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Public tolls to beat private, province vows

TRAFFIC

407 East nearly 6¢ less per km than 407 ETR at busy times

The new publicly owned Highway 407 East will cost rush-hour motorists nearly six cents less per kilometre in some busy periods than the existing 407 ETR tolls.

At other times, however, the price difference will be only a fraction of a penny per kilometre less on the publicly owned section of highway.

The province has promised to keep its 407 tolls below the ETR rates when the new stretch opens next spring between Brock Road in Pickering and Harmony Road in Oshawa.

The proposed prices for the new highway range from 19 cents a kilometre to 29 cents a kilometre, according to the Ministry of Transportation website.

The existing, privately run 407 ETR charges between roughly 20 cents and 35 cents a kilometre in the regular zone. The 407 light zone — a stretch from Highway 410 to Highway 427 — ranges from about 20 cents to 33 cents a kilometre.

Any price increases on the publicly owned section would be tied to the rate of inflation, Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said earlier this month. He also promised that the new $1.2-billion road would initially be free to drive for an unspecified period while drivers become accustomed to it.

The most significant price difference comes in the weekday rush hours, when the roads are most heavily travelled. Drivers will pay about a nickel less a kilometre on the provincial section than on the ETR.

Large trucks and buses are tolled nearly twice as much by the province but get commensurate savings — about a dime a kilometre less than some periods on the privately run highway.

"Heavier vehicles add significantly more to the costs of highway maintenance and repair than their lighter counterparts. This is why commercial vehicle rates are set at two or three times the light-vehicle rates respectively," said the ministry.

"As part of our commitment, tolls drivers will pay to drive along the new 407 East will be lower than the 407 ETR and the revenue will be re-invested into the province's services and critical infrastructure," Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said in a statement from his staff.

> **Heavier vehicles add significantly more to the costs.**
> Ministry of Transportation

Earlier this month, the government announced that the highway, which was supposed to open on Friday, wasn't finished due to delays in early design work and because remaining pavement markings and asphalt work couldn't be done in the winter.

Highway 407 ETR was built by the province but leased to a private Canadian-Spanish consortium, which collects the tolls. It runs from about Brock Road in Pickering west to the QEW in Burlington. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

29	**34.73**
It costs 29 cents a kilometre to drive the provincially owned 407 East on a weekday between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.	It costs 34.73 cents a kilometre on the privately operated 407 ETR in the regular zone on weekdays between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.
19	**19.74**
It costs 19 cents a kilometre to drive the 407 East weekdays between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.	It's 19.74 cents a kilometre to drive the 407 ETR from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the regular and light zones.

Even with the rain, the bicycle stands at Bathurst Station were full Monday. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

PUBLIC TRANSIT

TTC eyes better bike integration

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

The TTC is poised to become a better way for bicycles.

TTC board members will discuss a variety of new initiatives this week aimed at better integrating bikes into the city's transit system.

In particular, the red rocket is looking to boost the amount of bike parking near prominent stops and stations. The TTC has earmarked $50,000 for the cause and says it will analyze the city's cycling data to install new bike rings on a "per-need basis."

The board is also expected to ask staff to report back on redesigning bus shelters to include bike parking.

According to a TTC survey, 11 per cent of passengers ride their bikes to public transit. More important, however, is that 61 per cent of riders said they would consider doing the same. It's unclear why they're not riding, but the TTC hopes better infrastructure is part of the solution.

"These stats demonstrate the integral role the TTC plays in creating an environment that facilitates cycling, and we are aligning our efforts with those of the city to ensure that Toronto achieves its vision for cycling," reads a recent TTC report.

Other ideas to be discussed include installing Bike Share stands at more stations in early 2016 as well as requiring all new TTC stations to be bicycle-accessible. Dufferin and Pape stations, for example, feature bicycle stair channels that help cyclists bring their ride to the platform.

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SCARBOROUGH

Subway cost clarity threatens line

What developers say is a "fundamental defect" in the necessary paperwork threatens to undo the city's plans for the controversial Scarborough subway.

As the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) takes on the city with an appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board, that's just one of many issues that effectively puts the subway, and the future of transit in Scarborough, on trial.

At a hearing last week, BILD's lawyers argued the city failed in a key document to spell out the operating costs for the subway as they are required to by provincial legislation. What's more, BILD's lawyers say planning justifications for the subway extension are flawed and ridership numbers exaggerated.

The fight centres on a new, citywide development charge council imposed to collect $165 million of its $910 million share for the subway.

If BILD is successful in its appeal, the city could have to go back to the drawing board to raise some or all of the needed $165 million. Though that's just a fraction of the total $3.56-billion cost being shared with the provincial and federal governments.

Regardless of the outcome, the appeal could land the subway file back on the desks of city councillors early next year amid growing criticism over whether it should be built at all.

According to the provincial Development Charges Act, a background study must be completed before a development charge is approved and a bylaw passed. That study must include an "examination" of long-term cost projections — such as what it will cost to keep a three-stop subway extension running for decades. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Vehicle Awards are not transferable and no cash substitutes are permitted. Not all awards have the same odds of winning. For full rules and program details visit your GM dealer or gm.ca. Correct answer to mathematical skill-testing question required. See your GM dealer or gm.ca for full contest rules and program details. ▼/*/♦/1/***Freight & PDI ($1,600/$1,650/$1,700), registration, air and tire levies and OMVIC fees included. Insurance, licence, PPSA, dealer fees and applicable taxes not included. Offers apply as indicated to 2015 or 2016 new or demonstrator models of the vehicle equipped as described. Offers apply to qualified retail customers in the Ontario Chevrolet Dealer Marketing Association area only (including Outaouais). Dealers are free to set individual prices. Quantities limited; dealer order or trade may be required. Limited time offers which may not be combined with other offers. 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Edible history — but don't eat it

CNE

Piece of cake dates to 1967, HP sauce from Depression era

Chris Bateman
For Metro | Toronto

Alicia Cherayil, heritage program co-ordinator for the Canadian National Exhibition, shows off the fair's vintage Christmas cake, also seen above. Other foods found in CNE archives include two free samples from the 1930s: HP sauce, top right, and a tin of Neilson's Jersey cocoa.
LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

So you think your grandmother's got an old piece of Christmas cake?

Tucked away in the Canadian National Exhibition archives among black and white photographs and dusty files is a 48-year-old piece of fruitcake in its original packaging.

Heritage program co-ordinator Alicia Cherayil said the treat was given out to visitors as part of Canada's centennial of confederation celebrations in 1967.

"It was just a fun little giveaway," she said. "There was lots of cake that year."

Despite its age, the plastic-wrapped slice appears healthy.

"It still looks fine, which is very strange," Cherayil said. "I don't think anyone should eat it. I don't know what's keeping it the way it is."

In August 1967, the CNE coated its bandshell in a giant edible maple leaf flag. A smaller version of the cake was served to dignitaries.

As part of the celebration, the CNE handed out little pieces of fruitcake to guests. No one is sure why, but an enterprising employee decided to keep a sample for posterity.

"It's just another fun piece of our history," Cherayil said. "I like to show it to people because it's such a weird piece of our archival collection. It's this interesting piece of ephemera."

The CNE's fruitcake might be closing in on half a century, but there are other even older desserts out there.

In 2011, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported on a 100-year-old piece of spice cake found in a closet in 1992.

The CNE also has a sample bottle of HP sauce that dates from the 1930s.

Toronto culinary historian Liz Driver said with some TLC, the CNE cake could still be edible.

"The very best fruitcakes are the ones that are so full of fruit that there's almost no flour. It's all dried fruit, so they just last," she said.

"You can rehydrate them with alcohol, often brandy. I certainly think it would work. I don't see why it wouldn't."

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METRO EXPLAINS

New mortgage rules

REAL ESTATE

Purchases may need to be deferred or scaled back

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

New mortgage rules aimed at cooling the hot housing markets of Toronto and Vancouver will make some buyers think twice before taking out a large mortgage with little money down, experts say.

Beginning in February, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) will require homebuyers to put a 10 per cent down payment on the portion of any mortgage it insures between $500,000 and $1 million. For homes below $500,000, and the portion or pricier homes below $500,000, CMHC will still require only five per cent down. The 20 per cent rule for homes bought for more than $1 million remains in place.

Metro talked to BMO senior economist Robert Kavcic to boil it all down.

Will there be a rush on buying homes before the new rules kick in?
I think so. Even if the rules won't necessarily impact everyone, there might be a perception out there that they do — there isn't a full understanding of it. We often see that.

What about people who are buying their first home but can't meet the new requirement?
It means either deferring that purchase until you can make that down payment requirement, or just scaling down the value of the home that you're looking at. A third option is finding an alternate source of financing to meet that down payment — going to mom and dad, for example.

How many people will be impacted by this change?
It's tough to gauge it precisely, but we've figured that, at most, it might be one or two per cent of total sales in Canada (mostly located in Vancouver and Toronto).

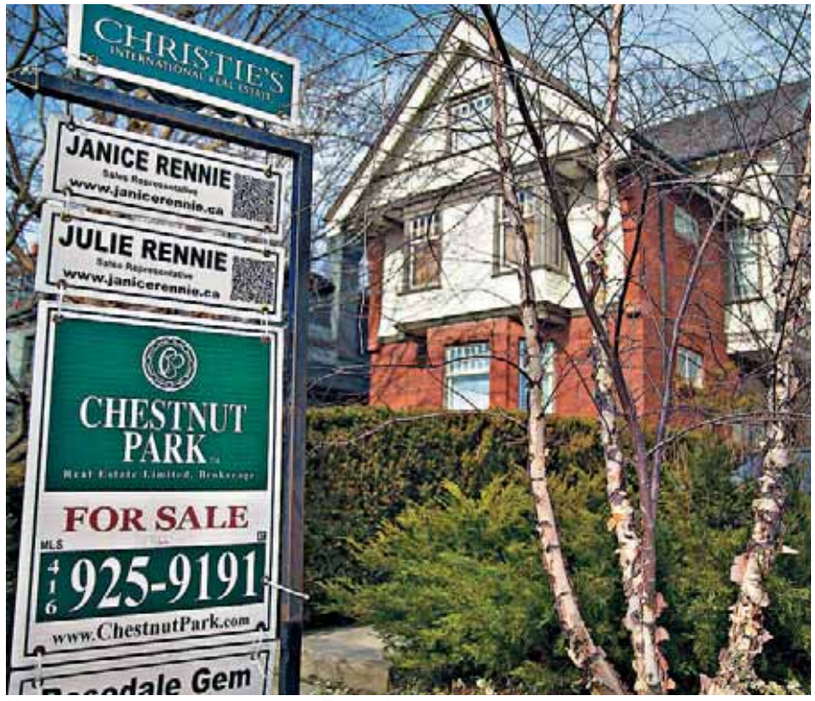
Could this change prevent people from making a financial mistake?
That's where the measures are targeted: Buyers in the two hottest markets in Canada (Toronto and Vancouver) who might be stretching to meet their down payment and get into a situation where they have very low equity. It might convince some of those buyers to hit the pause button or scale back on the size of the purchase they're going to make.

Overall, is this new measure a good idea or a bad idea?
It's a step in the right direction of cooling down what is looking like an excessive price momentum in those two markets.

Do you think there will be a housing price crash or major correction in Toronto?

Robert Kavcic CONTRIBUTED

No. We've been saying no for easily three or four years now, and that's still the case.



New mortgage rules aimed at cooling Toronto's hot **housing market** could leave some first-time buyers looking for more cash to put down, one expert says. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

FIREFIGHTER'S DEATH

Man not criminally responsible: Judge

A Toronto man has been found not criminally responsible, due to a mental disorder, in the unprovoked killing of an off-duty firefighter at a Danforth Avenue café in 2013.

Nabil Huruy, 26, had been charged with first-degree murder for the death of Dominic Parker, 45.

The court heard that Huruy and the victim did not know each other, but that Huruy started repeatedly stabbing him after he sat down next to Parker at the Rotana café.

Huruy then fled in a taxi.

Superior Court Justice Ian Nordheimer made it clear in his Dec. 10 ruling that Parker had not provoked Huruy.

In his ruling finding Huruy not criminally responsible, Nordheimer said experts concluded the accused did not know his actions were morally wrong, and he likely suffers from schizophrenia.

Huruy had previously made statements about people and the government being after him, Nordheimer wrote.

"Mr. Huruy was paranoid, had armed himself with two knives, and was the subject of delusions, including hearing voices," the judge wrote.

Given the verdict, Huruy will now fall under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Review Board, which will decide on an appropriate disposition for Huruy.

Nordheimer acknowledged the verdict will bring little comfort to Parker's family.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Dominic Parker CONTRIBUTED

BILINGUALISM

Wynne to say sorry for old French ban

Premier Kathleen Wynne is willing to apologize to Ontario Francophones for a 1912 regulation that prohibited teachers in elementary schools from speaking with students in French.

Wynne says it would be "very appropriate" for her to offer an official apology on behalf of the Ontario government to acknowledge that the province's bilingual heritage wasn't always respected in the past.

Sudbury Liberal backbencher Glenn Thibeault moved a motion last week asking that the government issue an official apology for Regulation 17, which was enforced for 15 years and finally fell into abeyance by 1944.

Thibeault says an official apology would demonstrate that the provincial government recognizes its past errors and is serious about growing the Franco-Ontarian identity and culture.

Timmins-James Bay New Democrat Gilles Bisson says his party will vote in favour of the apology because "it doesn't hurt," but he calls it much ado about nothing because the ban on French in schools hasn't been enforced in 70 years.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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RACCOONS

Fifth rabies case confirmed

More vaccine-laced baits will be dropped in Ontario after wildlife officials said a fifth case of raccoon rabies had been confirmed.

The infected raccoon was found Friday in a small community north of Cayuga, about 25 kilometres south of Hamilton, where the four earlier rabies cases were located, said the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

That the virus has surfaced kilometres from the initial area is "not alarming," the ministry's manager of wildlife research Chris Davies said.

> **You find the cases and you bait out to them.**
> Chris Davies

Tens of thousands of rabies vaccine baits were dropped last week in an expanded area south and southwest of Hamilton in an effort to contain the outbreak.

And a crew set to fly over a 25-kilometre circle around the area Monday were to take up to 147,000 baits, Davies said.

The re-emergence of the virus only came to light after two dogs got into a fight with a sick animal in the back of an animal services van in Hamilton.

The dogs appear to be fine and remain in quarantine with the city's Animal Services unit, according to owner Paula Fancey's lawyer, Brian Simo.

The dogs have received rabies shots while in quarantine.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

MISSISSAUGA

Woman in custody over toddler's death

A woman is in custody after a toddler was found dead in Mississauga Monday afternoon.

Peel police were called to an apartment complex on Sherobee Road at 2:36 p.m. for an "assist citizen" call. Officers found the little boy dead and took a woman into custody at the scene, according to Const. Rachel Gibbs.

The woman's relationship to the boy is unclear.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Ottawa children's choir praised by Trudeau

An Ottawa school choir's song billed on social media as a welcome to Syrian refugees coming to Canada has garnered widespread attention including praise from the prime minister.

The song was posted on YouTube under the title Welcome to Canada Syrian Refugees. According to the post, it was a historical song sung to the Prophet Muhammad when he sought refuge from Mecca to Medina.

The song has been viewed nearly 700,000 times, including by Justin Trudeau. "WATCH: Ottawa high school students sing a traditional Arabic welcome song. Well done De La Salle," Trudeau tweeted.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Man charged with murder in death of N.B. woman

Police in Grenada have charged a 26-year-old man with non-capital murder in the death of a New Brunswick woman who disappeared more than a week ago on the Caribbean island.

Assistant Supt. Sylvan McIntyre of the Royal Grenada Police Force said Akim Frank appeared in court Monday in the island's capital of St. George's to face the charge, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The 26-year-old Frank turned himself in Friday after being wanted in connection with the disappearance of Linnea Veinotte, a mother of two young boys who was last seen jogging with her dog.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Author's plea to Santa

CORRESPONDENCE

Yann Martel pens letter to Father Christmas

Dear Father Christmas,

I feel impelled to write to you this year, such is the state of the world. The crisis in Syria, with its bountiful bloodshed and endless flow of refugees, the psychotic insanity of ISIS, the climate which keeps changing for the worse while we only pretend to change our carbon-fuel-devouring ways — to name just a handful of crises that make me shake my head and drop it in my hands — what is one to do but appeal to a greater force? And you are a greater force, are you not? You still manage to make people smile, if only briefly. Is it the bringing together of families, some of whom are genuinely glad to see each other again? Is it the music, those lovely hymns that pull at our hearts? Is it the scenes around Christmas trees that remind us of our younger, happier selves? Is it the gift-giving which, however commodified, still involves giving with the aim to please? Is it the focus on a meal that is meant not to be rushed but enjoyed in and of itself? Whatever it is, you still have an effect, don't you? Children still turn to you with glee, and grown-ups follow them, even if they pretend they don't want to.

I appeal to you. Father Christmas, please take this bruised and battered world, wrap it in gift-wrap paper, and return it to us so that we might open it up with the same sense of wonder and delight that children show when they open the gifts you bring them. Make this world once again the beautiful, marvelous present that it is.

I hesitate. As far as I know, no lasting cessation of hostilities, no reconciliation has ever come about as a result of your intervention. No group — neither the United Nations nor any country nor any religious or political group — has ever asked you to be a mediator or a negotiator. You are jolly and friendly and very generous, but somehow you are left to yourself in your Arctic kingdom. How foolish of me then to ask world peace of you. I'm asking too much. You are as impotent as the other great talkers of peace and love, the Jesuses and Muhammeds and Krishnas and Buddhas of this world who talk love while their fervent disciples wage war and terror.

Yann Martel
HANDOUT

But perhaps the problem is that they ask so much of us. Jesus and Muhammed and Krishna and Buddha are demanding moral patrons. It takes a clear mind and a steady heart to follow them sensibly day in and day out. You, on the other hand, of the 365 and ¼ days of the year, you work to have an effect on only a single day. Of course, that single day takes much preparation on your part, much like writing even the shortest poem demands much work. But still, 1 divided by 365.25: that's only a 0.27 per cent positive output. On one day, December 25th, you are a busy man whose simple aim is to spread good cheer. And you do that job well.

So I ask this of you, only this, Father Christmas, please could you double your output? On one extra day (in summer perhaps — we do tire of winter), could you come down from your snowy realm and spread good cheer to all?

World peace on two days of the year — is that too much to ask? I hope it isn't.

Yours humbly, Yann Martel

Letters Live, a celebration of the power of written correspondence held in London since 2013, was launched this year with letters to Father Christmas by such celebrities as Benedict Cumberbatch and Russell Brand.

QUEBEC NO CHARGES IN 2014 BLAZE No criminal charges will be laid in the fire that killed 32 people at a seniors' residence in Quebec nearly two years ago, the Crown announced Monday. "The DPCP (the Crown) is not able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a criminal act was ever committed," prosecutor Annie Landreville said.

FRANCES DROUIN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Morgan Doucet struggles with a rare blood disease.
CONTRIBUTED

HEALTH

Sick boy denied coverage

A New Brunswick mother says she's devastated after the provincial government rejected her request to fund an expensive drug treatment for her seriously ill son.

Morgan Doucet is 10 and has a rare blood condition called morquio syndrome that stunts growth and causes multiple health problems, including heart and airway disease.

There is no cure, but in 2014 Health Canada approved a new drug to treat the condition called Vimizim.

Last year, Doucet's doctor asked the province to pay for the treatment, which can cost about $200,000 a year. But in November his mother, Carolle Mazerolle, got word the province had turned them down.

"I cried," said Mazerolle in a phone interview from her home in the small community of Baie-Sainte-Anne.

"I find that terrible. I have a sick child. They have a treatment there that could help him, and they won't give it to me."

Mazerolle said her son's condition has already deteriorated since they made the request of the province. "The more I'm waiting, the worse he's getting," she said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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SYRIA

Troops seize opposition stronghold

Syrian troops and allied militiamen seized control of a sprawling military airbase near Damascus on Monday, bolstering the government's presence in a key area overwhelmingly controlled by opposition forces.

The Marj al-Sultan airbase lies in the eastern suburb of Damascus known as Eastern Ghouta, and had been held by rebels for the past three years.

The capture is a rare victory for the government in an area considered an opposition stronghold. It bolsters the government's hold over Damascus International Airport and splits rebel-held areas.

Fighting on the ground in Syria has intensified even as the international community makes its most serious push yet to restart peace talks between President Bashar Assad's government and the rebels.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is heading to Russia for talks aimed at narrowing gaps with Russian leaders over a political transition to end the country's nearly five-year civil war.

Washington and Moscow are deeply divided over the political process they both agree is needed to end the war in Syria.

On Monday, a visiting UN official said the situation in the war-ravaged country is "a blot on our collective conscience."

Humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien said he was "deeply saddened" by the uptick in violence. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

6.5M

Number of Syrians who are internally displaced. Two million children are out of school and 72 per cent of the population lacks drinking water. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man holds a baby after their arrival from Turkey on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Saturday. The European Union signed an agreement on Monday for a rent subsidy program for up to 20,000 people next year. SANTI PALACIOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EU to cover shelter costs

REFUGEES

Greece to house 20,000 migrants with 80M euros

The European Union pledged Monday to spend 80 million euros ($88 million US) to house migrants in Greece even as it seeks tougher procedures for asylum-seekers travelling to the continent.

Kristalina Georgieva, the EU Commissioner for Budget and Human resources, signed an agreement for a rent subsidy program for up to 20,000 people next year.

Thousands of stranded refugees are currently being housed in old venues from the 2004 Olympics, at camps on Greek islands, or are sleeping in tents pitched in city squares and parks in Athens.

"The 80 million euros is for the year 2016 ... after that it would be assessed. It could be expanded," Georgieva told The Associated Press. "The number involved over the year would be quite a lot higher than 20,000."

Nearly 800,000 migrants and refugees have crossed through Greece this year, hoping to travel to northern Europe. But Macedonia and other Balkan countries last month toughened their border rules, restricting crossings to those from war-torn nations like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and stranding others. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE EU SUBSIDY

Will pay for hotel vouchers and rent cheques for migrants to live in vacant Greek apartments. More than 20,000 migrants may be sheltered this way.

IN BRIEF

Cosby countersues women

Bill Cosby fired back Monday at seven women suing him for defamation.

In a countersuit, Cosby alleges the women made "malicious, opportunistic, and false and defamatory accusations." against him. Cosby is seeking monetary damages "to the maximum extent permitted by law." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighter falls to death

Chicago firefighter Daniel Capuano, 42, died Monday after falling two storeys down an elevator shaft while fighting a warehouse blaze on the city's South Side. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Trump's words hurt kids

UNITED STATES

Young minds suffer from Islamophobic sentiment

A backlash against American Muslims is leaving a mark on some of the nation's youngest minds.

After seeing U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump call on television for barring Muslims from entering the country, Sofia Yassini, 8, checked the locks on her family's home in Plano, Texas, imagining the army would take them away. She raced to her room and stuffed a pair of Barbie dolls, a tub of peanut butter and a toothbrush into a bag. She insisted on bringing boots for the long boat ride she imagined was coming.

When her mother, Melissa, arrived home from her work as a human resources manager, Sofia ran into her arms and cried.

"I want people to understand the impact that their words have on these children," said Melissa Yassini, who described the experience in a Facebook post that had been shared more than 21,000 times as of Monday. "We often forget, we're waging war on one another with words, and we're adults. We can take it. The kids are suffering with this. They go to school every day and they're afraid to tell people they're Muslim. This has to stop."

Anti-Muslim sentiment was building in the days before 14 people were killed Dec. 2 in the massacre at a disability centre in Southern California by a Muslim couple investigators say were inspired at least in part by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group. Experts say Trump's call Dec. 7 to keep all Muslims from entering the U.S. — a plan he said would apply only temporarily and to non-citizens — only fanned the flames.

Muslim parents say their children hear disparaging remarks in their own communities, see hateful bumper stickers and T-shirts, and have had friends abandon them.

Ahad Khan, 12, came home from school in rural Westminster, Md., in tears because his best friend called him a future terrorist, according to Ahad's father, Raza Khan.

Khan, the chairman of the science department at Carroll Community College, shared Ahad's experience in an open letter to Trump on Facebook. As of Monday, it had been shared more than 4,300 times.

As Khan tucked his son in last week, he left him with the words he recited when he became a U.S. citizen two decades ago: "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"I don't know why, I don't know how people forget that," Khan said. "We have to; otherwise we're dividing ourselves."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Line from U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, recited by Ahad Khan to his son Raza Khan last week

Sofia Yassini, 8, receives a hug from her mother Melissa Yassini in Richardson, Texas. Parents say U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump's comments are causing confusion for many children. LM OTERO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANCE

Teacher makes up attack

A preschool teacher who claimed to have been attacked by a masked assailant invoking ISIL made up the story, French prosecutors said Monday.

The story set off a manhunt in the northern Paris suburb of Aubervilliers.

Both the Paris prosecutor's office and the local prosecutor said the teacher was being questioned Monday afternoon.

The false report comes as France remains under a state of emergency after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris by Islamic State-linked extremists that left 130 people dead and hundreds wounded.

A few weeks later, ISIL urged its followers to attack teachers in France, saying the secular education system was poisoning young minds.

French schools have imposed strict security measures since previous attacks in January, with doors locked during the day, identity checks for visitors and periodic bag searches.

Families are not permitted to linger near schools' entrances.

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Taxi industry hits back with new app

RIDESHARING

Unlike Uber, The Ride tacks on service provider's fees

Canada's taxi industry has a new tool in its fight against the rise of Uber.

The Ride, a new app launched on Monday, works similarly to Uber by offering passengers a more tech-savvy way to connect with local taxi-cab companies.

Like Uber, users must open a personal profile and then use the cellphone's GPS location feature before they hail a cab through the virtual service.

Unlike Uber, The Ride comes with extra fees through your wireless provider. The app will charge a fixed $2 "convenience fee" for hailing a nearby taxi.

In smaller towns, where local cab companies may not support the app yet, The Ride will charge $1 to connect to a local dispatch centre over the phone.

A police officer rides his bike between a row of cabs blocking the street during a recent taxi drivers day of protest against Uber in Toronto. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toronto-based CellWand Communications created The Ride. CellWand is the company behind #TAXI, a voice phone service that connects customers to a local cab company for a service fee.

CellWand's new app also provides real-time public transit schedules for 75 cities and communities across the country, with plans to roll out data on bike-sharing services next year.

Taxi-cab operators have been clashing with Uber, urging local governments in some cities to ban the service over various concerns, such as proper licensing and insurance.

Toronto cab drivers staged a protest last week to back their call for local bylaws that would clamp down on UberX drivers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

INVESTIGATION

Major retailers sell slave-peeled shrimp

Poor migrant workers and children are being sold to factories in Thailand and forced to peel shrimp that ends up in global supply chains, including those of Walmart and Red Lobster, an investigation has found.

At the Gig Peeling Factory, nearly 100 Burmese labourers were trapped, most working for almost nothing. They spent 16 hours a day with their hands in ice water, ripping the guts, heads, tails and shells off shrimp. "They didn't let us rest," said Eae Hpaw, 16, her arms a patchwork of scars from shrimp-related infections and allergies. "We stopped working around 7 in the evening. We would take a shower and sleep. Then we would start again around 3 in the morning."

Pervasive human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers. Despite repeated promises by businesses and government, abuses persist, fuelled by corruption and complicity among authorities.

Hundreds of shrimp-peeling sheds are hidden in plain sight in Samut Sakhon, an hour outside Bangkok, some with slaves locked inside. Last month, Associated Press journalists followed and filmed trucks loaded with freshly peeled shrimp from the Gig shed to major Thai exporting companies.

U.S. customs records show the shrimp made its way into the supply chains of major U.S. food stores and retailers such as Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods, Dollar General and Petco, along with restaurants such as Red Lobster and Olive Garden. It also entered supply chains for some well-known seafood brands and pet foods, including Chicken of the Sea and Fancy Feast. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Win Win Than, 25, who worked in a shrimp shed in Samut Sakhon, Thailand, to pay off her $550 US debt. She said she tried to run away but was caught and handcuffed in a room. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Big banks partnering with financial tech rivals

Financial technology start-ups are partnering with the very banks the so-called fintech companies had set out to upheave. CIBC has waded into online lending through Montreal-based upstart Thinking Capital, Scotiabank has invested in Kabbage, a U.S.-based lender, and Royal Bank CEO Dave McKay has noted the importance of collaborating with early stage companies. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

EMMA TEITEL: ON THE PROBLEM WITH POT MARKETING

There is nothing more mainstream than the LCBO. Premier Kathleen Wynne is probably right that such a place is well suited to the legal distribution of marijuana.

Ontario is a strange and contradictory place. You can't smoke a cigarette on a patio or, God forbid, on a sports field, but soon you might be able to drive to the nearest liquor store and pick up a bag of weed with your Chardonnay.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced this week that if marijuana is legalized in Canada as planned, she'd like the drug to be sold in provincially-owned LCBO stores. Who knows — maybe the LCBO will become the Costco of debauchery, where college kids can acquire the bulk of their party favours in a single trip.

This plan, fun as it sounds, is terrible news for would-be mom-and-pop pot dispensaries, independent sellers in the province who were hoping to turn a profit from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's legal weed promise. But perhaps their loss is our gain. After all, what better way to deplete the marijuana black market and battle stigmatization around casual pot use than by making the drug appear as conventional and mainstream as possible?

There is nothing more mainstream than the LCBO, where customers can donate money to charity every time they check out, and wine coolers are often stored the earnestly titled "Party Zone" section. Wynne is probably right that such a place is well suited to the legal distribution of marijuana; sure, potwary people will be shocked and possibly angry the first few times they walk into the LCBO and see and smell green, but by their fourth or fifth visit the drug will register as no more offensive than Mike's Hard Lemonade or pumpkin-spice vodka (and maybe less so). Besides, what better way to get mom to try that sativa strain you know will alleviate her sciatica problem than a trip to the LCBO where the pot is steps away from the Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc?

Who knows — maybe the LCBO will become the Costco of debauchery.

High hypocrisy If the LCBO suggests cheese and wine pairings, logically it should recommend food and Netflix accompaniments for cannabis, which is far less dangerous to public health, Emma Teitel writes. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Yet where Wynne's plan succeeds on public access it fails big time in its messaging to younger Canadians.

When marijuana becomes legal we are told the LCBO will be extremely careful not to promote pot. Last month, Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, said if the LCBO sells pot it will work within a "strong regulatory framework," where the drug is subject to a "ban on marketing." Government-regulated pot sold by government dispensaries, Wynne tells us, is "socially responsible" because, among other things, impressionable teens won't be bombarded with pot-positive messaging.

This may sound like a good thing, and it would be, were it not for the fact that this selective marketing is hypocritical in the extreme. Drinking alcohol, according to a study in the U.S. National Library of Medicine, is riskier than smoking pot, yet the LCBO — a government body— markets and glorifies alcohol like Colgate does toothpaste."

From its sprawling wall ads featuring smiling, sun-kissed beer drinkers to its extensive wine pairing lists ("These easy-drinking wines are great anytime-sippers"), it's no mystery that the government has not and will not take the same interest in warning kids against alcohol as it will in warning them against marijuana. But it should, because selling both alcohol and pot in the same government-regulated store and feverishly marketing the former while warning against the latter, suggests the latter — marijuana — is more dangerous than alcohol. And this simply isn't true.

In the spirit of fairness and public-health accuracy, if weed becomes legal, the LCBO should market both substances equally. In fact, government stores should run a "pot pairings list" alongside their wine pairings list. If a Riesling is good with "spicy Thai dishes," and "Indian curry" (which somehow I doubt) the LCBO should also inform Ontarians about the appropriate food and Netflix pairings for an Indica, Purple Haze, and Mango Kush. If its catalogues feature photos of thirty-something women sitting by a fire, beaming at each other over generous glasses of Merlot, it should also feature potheads cracking up on a ski hill or staring blankly into space on an exceptionally worn sofa.

Of course it makes logical sense that the government would market alcohol and not weed. (I am also just as elated as anyone else about the fact that this week select supermarkets across the province began selling beer). Alcohol is socially acceptable and weed is not. But it doesn't make moral sense. Recreational pot use may make you laugh at things that aren't funny, eat things that aren't tasty and spiral into a vortex of self-doubt. But it probably won't kill you. Our government shouldn't indicate otherwise.

Emma Teitel is a national columnist for the Toronto Star. She has been a front-of-the-book columnist for Maclean's magazine for the past four years, focusing on a wide range of subjects including women's issues and popular culture. She won the National Magazine Awards gold award for columns in 2013.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

Make peace with holiday chaos and savour the season

I met a friend for coffee, and neither of us had words for how we're doing.

"Blaahh!" she said with her hands flailing in the air.

It had taken us an extended series of emails to finally pick a time and place to meet — we're each busy, our brains full, at this time of year. She has better reasons: kids, the culmination of a few major projects, the anticipation of a few more. But even I — who normally have ample time for Gilmore Girls reruns — have been packing my days with holiday get-togethers tight as a bulging suitcase.

My sense of calm is out the window, and it's wonderful.

The drink date with a few friends where I meet someone new, funny and charmingly opinionated.

The dinner date where we decided to attend one random event a week in 2016 and call it The Outing (Salsa! Pottery! An academic lecture of the esoteric kind!).

The lunch with my aunt and uncle where politics stayed off the table and we bonded over old stories of my grandmother, which expand in the retelling.

The brunch/skate/The Power Plant gallery trip where we ate slowly, slid on ice as the lake water rippled by and found ourselves in a beautiful, yet repellent, infestation of black paper butterflies.

It doesn't take much to see the precious side.

The drunken debate over communism at the pub. The "once a year whether you need it or not" lunch with an old family friend and his joke-ready compatriots. The cosy, classic dinner at my home away from home.

And the other morning's coffee date, which left me excited about everything, and convinced of all things hopeful, most especially the joy of new friends.

In a city where I can go months without seeing some people, this time of year is a whirlwind of love, a helter-skelter romp through relationships, a fast-track reminder of how lucky I am, how rich in kind people.

This is the Christmas feeling. Of time well spent. Each little visit its own small gift. Its own chance to be smitten, and to feel good about who you are, and where you are, and who you know. That can be an elusive sense much of the year, when you're just trying to get by, and get something done, while the world seems held up by intractable wars, unfathomable suffering and impending doom of one kind or another.

Perhaps it is, but it is not only.

And as it turns out, it doesn't take much, or long, to see the precious side.

Just a cup of coffee.

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metro LIFE
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Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Fans get chance to say Hello to Adele
Singer to embark on 56-night North American tour in 2016 with stops in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Period pieces are trending

APPS

Women's health goes high-tech

In the tech world, women's health is at the forefront — with hundreds of apps focusing on everything from getting pregnant to detecting breast cancer. Lots of other high-tech products in the works too, from Bluetooth-connected menstrual cups to high-tech pill cases that send an alert to your phone if you skip your birth control.

Not surprisingly, women around the world are embracing it all.

Travel writer Natalie Preddie Zamojc, 30, and her husband Mark are trying to have a baby, and Zamojc is using a popular period tracking app — aptly named Period Tracker — to see when she's most fertile. It gives her a sense of control over a process that's often based on luck, she says.

"Now, it'll send me a message being like, "You've ovulating!" and then it's go, go, go," Zamojc says with a laugh.

As the New York Times reported earlier this year, two period tracking apps alone — GP International's Period Tracker, the app Zamojc swears by, and Abishkking's Period Calendar/Tracker — have been downloaded more than 10 million times from the Android store, based on data from the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics.

Pillsy, an app coupled with a unique pouch, helps women keep on top of taking their birth control. COLE BURSTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Recently, thousands backed a Kickstarter campaign for the Looncup, raising over $160,000 for the silicone cup that sends fluid volume updates to your phone or Apple Watch through a sensor.

And, according to a 2014 TechCrunch report, women's health apps raised more money in the previous year "than all other health-focused apps combined."

It's a big business — and one that's empowering for women, says Toronto-based sexual health educator Lyba Spring. "Anything that gives a woman more control over her reproductive health and her fertility… is a good thing," she says. Certain aspects of women's health should involve a family doctor, Spring adds — like understanding the changes in cervical mucus, for instance — but for basic health and fertility issues, apps are definitely useful, she says.

Jennifer Aldoretta, CEO of Groove, an American company whose app of the same name helps women track their cycles, was born out of its founder's own lengthy reproductive health struggles

"My period brought with it horrible cramps," Aldoretta recalls. "I would vomit from the pain."

Aldoretta started doing her own research on reproductive health and hormones, which led her to develop the Groove app, which she now uses to manage her painful cramps without having to take the pill.

The app, which launched for the iPhone in 2014, allows her to track certain physiological changes that occur throughout your menstrual cycle — such as basal body temperature and cervical fluid secretion — which are both influenced by hormone levels, she says.

Apps can definitely be helpful for women, with many offering a "simple, cost-effective way" to prevent, or make possible, a pregnancy, says Dr. Yolanda Kirkham, an obstetrician-gynecologist who works at Women's College Hospital and St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto. She's noticed a rise in the number of her patients using period trackers and other apps, she says, and encourages her patients to try them out. Women just need to be smart and research the apps and technology they're using, Kirkham says. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

HEALTH

Birth control reminder
Women on the pill make up nearly half of all unplanned pregnancies. With that in mind, a six-person team of University of Toronto graduate students has been developing Pillsy, a smart pouch and app that knows if someone takes their birth control pill — and reminds them when they don't. "We've had a number of women come to us and say they're anxious and not on the birth control pill, but if they had the Pillsy pouch and app, they'd trust themselves more to go on the birth control pill," says Pillsy CTO Valentin Peretroukhin.

The Looncup sends fluid volume updates to your phone through a sensor.

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Stay healthy this winter

As cold and flu season kicks into high gear, here's what you need to do to get your defenses ready and stay healthy this winter.

First things first — start with a shot of prevention. Vaccination is the number one way to reduce your risk of severe flu symptoms this year. If you want to learn more about the flu shot, ask your Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacist or visit shoppersdrugmart.ca/flushot.

Remember that not all seasonal illnesses are prevented by the flu vaccine. Cold and flu germs are easily spread through contact with contaminated surfaces — anything from door knobs and shopping cart handles to faucets and even items of clothing.

Scrub your hands well with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds after touching anything that might carry germs. Be sure to have hand sanitizer nearby for when you can't wash.

Lack of sleep may compromise the immune system, so missing out on your zzzz's may make you more vulnerable to colds and flu. Sleep better by avoiding heavy meals or large amounts of liquid before bed. Studies suggest that sticking to a sleep schedule is also important for a good night's sleep.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Studies also show that vitamin D may help boost the immune system.

In winter, those of us in northern climates may be missing out on "the sunshine vitamin," so consider loading up on foods rich in vitamin D like milk and salmon. Enhance your diet with a vitamin D supplement or a multivitamin to help you stay healthy this winter.

Feel better when you're under the weather

Even if you're careful about prevention, you still may come down with a bug this winter. Check with your pharmacist to see which medications may be right for you.

For throat and chest

Robitussin Cough Control Extra Strength with Mucus and Phlegm Relief works to relieve sore throat pain, dry coughs and chest congestion.

For sinuses

Otrivin® Saline Severe Congestion Relief is a powerful, naturally sourced nasal spray that unblocks nasal passages and relieves nasal and sinus congestion. Breathe Right® non-medicated nasal strips instantly open up the nose and are available for both adults and kids. Advil® Cold & Sinus opens airways by shrinking swollen nasal passages, making it easier to breathe.

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THIS WEEK: Holiday Drinks

Two Yuletide favourites are apple cider and eggnog, however one of these bevvies belongs on the naughty list.

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PC Fresh Pressed Sweet Apple Cider

Portion 1 cup
Calories 120
Fat 0 g
Sugar 28 g

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PC World's Best Egg Nog

Portion 1 cup
Calories 290
Fat 11 g
Sugar 34 g

HERE'S WHY

Equivalent to 2 small Grilled Chicken subs from Mr. Sub

Eggnog packs over double the calories and has 11gm of fat (half of it saturated) compared to the fat-free cider. If you're spiking your 'nog, you're adding even more calories. The cider is purely fresh pressed apples with no filtration process. The sugar comes from the apples themselves. Heat the cider and add some cinnamon and nutmeg. Even a small amount of alcohol will still make for a healthier Yuletide beverage than the eggnog.

Cooking for 1

SINGLE SERVING

Pack a one-portion punch with these shop and prep ideas

Millennials and seniors might be at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to age, but many have something in common: difficulty cooking at home for just one person.

For members of the younger generation, they may lack cooking skills, which can make forays into the kitchen intimidating.

"I think for seniors in particular there's that social isolation ... When you're on your own you might not feel like cooking for yourself," says registered dietitian Shannon Crocker.

There are other challenges for singles. Much of the packaged food in grocery stores is geared toward families. Relatively few cookbooks are targeted at preparing meals for one.

But many retailers are embracing single consumers. Some grocery stores roast their own meat and vegetables that can be mixed with grains cooked at home for a nutritious meal, says Crocker of Ancaster, Ont.

And stores commonly have large displays of prepackaged salads or stir-fry kits for added convenience. THE CANADIAN PRESS

SEVEN TASTY TIPS

1. Shop every few days for smaller portions of fresh produce.

2. Buy just what you need at the bulk store. Or find a shopping buddy and split bigger packages.

3. Prep on weekends to save time. Make a casserole or stew, then freeze in individual portions. Make a batch of barley or pasta to parcel out during the week.

4. Reinvent leftovers. Roast a pan of veggies for one dinner. Toss the remainder with pasta, goat cheese and nuts another night.

5. A small tin of tuna, a couple of hard-boiled eggs or half a can of chickpeas or black beans can be used to top packaged salad greens for a quick, healthy meal. Or add a serving of grilled meat, fish or shrimp.

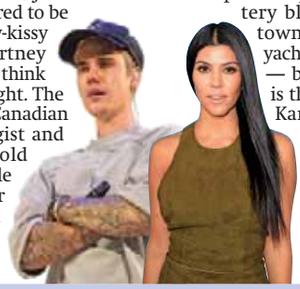
6. Meals don't always have to consist of meat, potato or starch and a vegetable. Add lentils to soup or extra veggies to an omelette or sandwich.

7. If you're a tea-and-toast person, look for ways to make toast more nutritious and interesting. Spread whole-grain toast with peanut butter and top with thinly sliced apple and cinnamon. Pop it briefly under the broiler. Or top toast with avocado, hummus and tomato slices. Other options: a fried egg and some sautéed mushrooms; or a soft poached egg and a piece of cheese on toast. Put some arugula under the egg to boost flavour.

DATING DUO

Bieber's stepping out with Kourtney

This is one I certainly did not see coming. In what could possibly just be a case of some tabloid editor playing around with their celebrity gossip Magnetic Poetry set, Justin Bieber is now rumored to be making kissy-kissy with … Kourtney Kardashian? I think I read that right. The 21-year-old Canadian serial apologist and the 36-year-old recently single reality TV star were spotted hitting up a club in L.A. together recently and departing in the same SUV. And according to CNN, a source says they were "making out," so there you go. Bieber, however, has also been spotted squiring a mystery blonde around town — and on a yachting excursion — but the gossip is that he and the Kardashian who isn't Kim or Khloe are "casually" seeing each other. So there's that. NED EHRBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD



GOSSIP BRIEF

Mariah's holiday chart topper not quite as sparkly

Mariah Carey's holiday hit All I Want For Christmas Is You is 20 years old. Yes, two decades. Since its release, it has been played practically on loop every holiday season — even by people who don't celebrate Christmas. But now, the Christmas queen has been dethroned.

According to PlayNetwork, The Shins' cover of Paul McCartney's Wonderful Christmastime is now the most played holiday song, bumping Carey down to No. 2. Christina Aguilera's song Christmas Time rounds out the top three. EMILY LAURENCE/METRO NEW YORK

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Being funny is in the delivery

THE SHOW: Brooklyn Nine-Nine, S3, E6 (City/Fox)
THE MOMENT: The Practice Breakup

Captain Raymond Holt, right, and Detective Rosa Diaz do a hilariously deadpan rehearsal Diaz's breakup with Holt's nephew Marcus, in Brooklyn Nine-Nine. CONTRIBUTED

Captain Raymond Holt (Andre Braugher) and Detective Rosa Diaz (Stephanie Beatriz) are in his office. She's been dating his nephew, Marcus, which has made them hilariously uncomfortable together, because they are the most deadpan, least emotionally demonstrative people on Earth. (Both actors remain straight-faced and even-voiced at all times.)

Now that Diaz is breaking up with Marcus, she and Holt are sad (they like each other), but mainly relieved (they can return to deadpan emotionlessness). "I've been told it helps to acknowledge the dumpee's feelings," Holt says. "Ew," Diaz replies. "Don't worry, we'll practice," he says. She straightens her shoulders. "Marcus," she says to Holt, "I think we should break up." "That makes me feel sad. I am sad," he replies. "Your sadness is noted," she says. "I feel acknowledged," he says. "It will take me eight minutes to collect my things." They smile, albeit tightly. That went well.

To achieve greatness as a sitcom, the humour must cease stemming from one-liners and plot points, and start stemming from the characters simply behaving as their funny selves. Brooklyn Nine-Nine hit that sweet spot early. The characters' foibles and frictions were well-defined, and the actors bounced off each other with glee. At the start of this season, plot intervened — Holt was transferred out of the unit. Thankfully the folks in charge realized their mistake and brought him back home. Now everyone can get back to doing what they do best: pushing each other's buttons, and letting us chuckle at how "them" they are.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

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Star Wars primer

Frozen in carbonite for the last 38 years? Recently returned from exile on Dagobah? You can still turn your watercooler into the Mos Eisley Cantina with this Star Wars 101 crash course, just in time for The Force Awakens. **COLIN MCNEIL/METRO**

1 All in the family

The ties that bind the Star Wars universe — through its soon-to-be seven films, myriad of novels and television shows — are familial ones. The story begins with a young Anakin Skywalker, who (spoiler alert!) grows into a Jedi Knight, falls to the Dark Side, and is defeated by his own children, Luke and Leia.

And it gets much deeper: Luke's mentors are the same as his father's, his droid companion C-3PO was built by his father. Darth Sidious (a.k.a Emperor Palpatine) hails from the same planet as Luke's mother.

With The Force Awakens set 30 years after Return of the Jedi, and a slew of new characters, it's a safe bet the Skywalker and Solo family trees will grow more branches. Just who are they and how are they related to the Skywalker legacy? Not even Jedi clairvoyance could reveal that.

2 The Force?

Obi-Wan Kenobi called the Force an "energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together." That's the philosophical view.

The prequel trilogy, much to the displeasure of many Star Wars fans, boiled the Force down to quantifiable, microscopic particles called midi-chlorians. The higher a being's midi-chlorian count, the more potentially powerful they could be in the ways of the Force.

There are two very broad categories of Force users — light side and dark side. The light side of the Force is all about peace, love and knowledge. Namaste. The dark side are the naughty ones — they use raw emotions like anger, fear and even love as their power base.

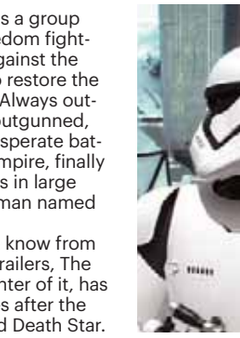
Metro visits a galaxy far, far away to bring you a guide to the Star Wars universe.

3 Empire vs. Rebellion

The bad guys in the original Star Wars trilogy, and likely in The Force Awakens, are the Galactic Empire — a totalitarian regime ruled by a Sith lord. The Empire is a xenophobic organization that enforces its rule of law with blaster rifles and storm troopers. In past films, they have committed genocide on a planetary scale.

The rebellion is a group of volunteer freedom fighters who stand against the Empire, trying to restore the Republic of old. Always outnumbered and outgunned, they fought a desperate battle against the Empire, finally toppling it thanks in large part to a young man named Luke Skywalker.

From what we know from the Episode VII trailers, The Empire, or a splinter of it, has survived decades after the fall of the second Death Star.



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WHO'S WHO

Droids
A catchall term for robots, shorthand for androids. Anything made of metal that moves around, bleeps and bloops or speaks is a droid. Though sentient, they possess no inherent rights or freedoms as beings.

Stormtroopers
The mainstay of the Empire's foot soldiers, these iconically armoured warriors have been present in nearly every Star Wars film. And yes, they're human beings underneath the armour.

Sleek spaceships
Almost true characters themselves, Star Wars symbolism is rife with iconic spaceships like the rough and tough Millennium Falcon, the darkly sleek Tie fighters, and the rebels' go-to space fighter of choice, the X-Wing.

Sith
The evil anti-thesis to the Jedi, they harness the power of the Dark Side of the Force. There can be only two Sith in existence at one time — a master, and an apprentice. These guys wield red lightsabers and adopt a 'decapitate first, ask questions later' attitude.

Jedi
Somewhere between medieval knights of Arthurian legend and mystic druids, Jedi are Force users who tap into the light side, using their power only for defence and knowledge.

COLIN MCNEIL/METRO

STAR WARS A TIMELINE OF THE UNIVERSE

Grab the popcorn and tell your protocol droid to hold your calls. We've got the ultimate, chronologically ordered Star Wars watchlist. **COLIN MCNEIL/METRO**

MAY 19, 1999

Ep. I: The Phantom Menace

Jedi Knights Obi-Wan Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn battle an evil Sith Lord called Darth Maul. Meanwhile, a young slave named Anakin Skywalker discovers his latent abilities in the Force.

GROSS $474,544,677

MAY 16, 2002

Ep. II: Attack of the Clones

Ten years later, Obi-Wan begins to unravel dark threads hinting at machinations behind a separatist war within the Galactic Republic, while Anakin falls in love with the former Queen of the planet he helped save as a boy.

GROSS $310,675,583

2003, 2008

Clone Wars

Two separate cartoon shows, Star Wars: Clone Wars (2003) and Star Wars: The Clone Wars (2008) bridge the three-year gap between Episodes II and III.

GROSS N/A

MAY 19, 2005

Ep. III: Revenge of the Sith

After a Sith Lord called Darth Sidious seizes the Republic in a political coup, he orders all Jedi exterminated. Embracing the dark side of the Force, Anakin joins him and becomes Darth Vader.

GROSS $380,262,555

2014, 1985

Rebels; Droids; and Ewoks

Three separate animated series, Rebels chronicles the genesis of the rebellion against the Galactic Empire, Ewoks follows a cast of the cuddly critters, and Droids the beloved characters C-3PO and R2-D2.

GROSS N/A

• ALL FIGURES REPRESENT TOTAL LIFETIME DOMESTIC GROSS

MAY 25, 1977

Ep. IV: A New Hope

Luke Skywalker, son of Anakin, joins a rebellion against what is now the Galactic Empire — a totalitarian regime ruled by Darth Vader and his master, Sidious. Luke befriends smuggler Han Solo and rebellion leader Princess Leia.

GROSS $460,998,007

JUNE 20, 1980

Ep. V: The Empire Strikes Back

Luke trains with the last of the Jedi masters — Yoda — in preparation for his battle with Darth Vader, while Han Solo and Leia are betrayed by an old friend. Vader reveals he is Luke's father.

GROSS $290,158,751

MAY 25, 1983

Ep. VI: Return of the Jedi

While Luke confronts his father and Emperor Palpatine personally, Han and Leia help rebel forces topple the Empire once and for all in a climactic space battle.

GROSS $309,125,409

1970S TO PRESENT

The lost storylines

For decades between the films, fans have sated their appetite for Star Wars with an entire galaxy of novels and comics. These books have now been officially de-canonized by Disney, leaving many beloved storylines in timeline purgatory.

GROSS N/A

DEC. 18, 2015

Ep. VII: The Force Awakens

The plot details of Episode VII are a closely guarded secret, but we do know Luke, Han and Leia feature in it, alongside new protagonists and a sinister looking Sith called Kylo Ren. It takes place 30 years after Episode VI.

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Pacers find top gear vs. Raps

NBA

Indiana overcomes slow start to snap T.O.'s win streak

MONDAY In Indiana

106	90
PACERS	RAPTORS

Jordan Hill had 20 points and 13 rebounds, Monta Ellis had 18 points and the Indiana Pacers beat the Raptors 106-90 on Monday night to end Toronto's four-game winning streak.

C.J. Miles added 17 points for the Pacers, who have won two of three games.

Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan each scored 20 points for the Raptors.

Indiana used a 39-4 run in the first half to climb out of a 21-point deficit and Lavoy Allen made two free throws to give the Pacers a 29-28 lead at the 11:38 mark in the second quarter.

Indiana took a 44-30 lead when Ellis converted a three-point play with 4:08 remaining in the first half.

Indiana snapped a five-game skid against Toronto, including a 106-99 loss in the season-opener on Oct. 28.

As the Pacers search for a way to end the team's worst stretch since losing three straight to start the year and get back to winning games, Hill and Ellis stepped up in a big way.

Ellis made a three-pointer early in the third quarter to put Indiana ahead 64-46 before Toronto went on a 10-0 run. Ellis scored on a layup to stop the spurt and later made a free throw when Lowry was called for a technical to give the Pacers a 67-56 lead with 4:43 left in the third.

Indiana got off to a slow start and Toronto jumped out to a big lead right from the start.

Lowry made two three-pointers and a basket and DeRozan scored a basket and a three to put the Raptors ahead 15-3 early in the opening quarter. Lowry scored to make it 26-5 with 6:01 remaining in the first quarter.

Then Indiana went on its big run.

Paul George, who finished with 16 points, made a three-pointer to give Indiana its first lead, 27-26, before Terrence Ross scored to put the Raptors ahead again at the end of the first quarter. After making the go-ahead free throws at the start of the second quarter, Allen scored again to make it 31-28.

Hill never let it get close again and scored nine points in the fourth quarter. He finished with his fourth double-double of the season.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pacers centre Jordan Hill corrals a rebound against the Raptors' Bismack Biyombo on Monday night in Indianapolis. R. BRENT SMITH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Toronto's DeMar DeRozan was named Eastern Conference player of the week on Monday for the first time in his seven-year career.

DeRozan led the Raptors in scoring in three of their four victories last week, averaging 24.0 points, 5.0 rebounds and 3.8 assists a game.

He also shot 51.7 per cent from the field and 91.9 from the free-throw line.

DeRozan scored a game-high 28 points Wednesday night in a 97-94 win over San Antonio. He followed it up with 27 points on Friday versus Milwaukee and 25 points on Sunday against Philadelphia to match his career high of three straight games with 25 or more points.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

DeMar DeRozan NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AWARDS

Serena honoured for a dominant 2015

Serena Williams is Sports Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year — the first female athlete honoured on her own by the magazine in more than 30 years.

Williams came within two matches of tennis' first calendar-year Grand Slam since 1988, a bid that ended with a semifinal loss at the U.S. Open.

In all, the 34-year-old American went 53-3 during 2015 with five titles, including at the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon. Williams was No. 1 in the WTA rankings all season.

"She was the most deserving person for the award. She had an amazing year. The way she won her events; the fact that she's done this for so many years at such a high level," said Paul Fichtenbaum, editor of the Sports Illustrated Group. "She was a terrific candidate in a year of terrific candidates."

> **She was the most deserving person for the award.**
> Sports Illustrated Group editor Paul Fichtenbaum

The cover photo of Williams — in high heels, sitting on a throne — was "her idea, intended ... to express her own ideal of femininity, strength, power," managing editor Christian Stone wrote on SI.com.

Monday's announcement marks a switch to the formal name of the SI award; past recipients were touted as Sportsman or Sportswoman of the Year. "We just felt this was a natural evolution. ... We're not making a huge deal out of it," Fichtenbaum said. "It just feels like the right time to make the change."

Runner Mary Decker in 1983 was the last female athlete to earn the magazine's award by herself. The U.S. women's national soccer team was picked by SI in 1999; speedskater Bonnie Blair in 1994 and gymnast Mary Lou Retton in 1984 were co-honorees with male Olympians. In 2011, Tennessee women's basketball coach Pat Summitt shared the award with Duke men's coach Mike Krzyzewski.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

Maas is new Eskimos coach

Jason Maas has taken charge of the Edmonton Eskimos. Maas spent last season as the offensive co-ordinator and quarterbacks coach with the Ottawa Redblacks, who lost to the Eskimos in this year's Grey Cup.

Under his guidance, Henry Burris was the league's leading passer and the CFL's Most Outstanding Player. Ottawa led the league in offensive yards, passing yards and rushing touchdowns.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB

Giants upgrade with deal for Cueto

The San Francisco Giants' upgraded rotation is taking shape, with the 2014 World Series champions agreeing Monday with Johnny Cueto on a six-year contract.

Cueto is set to join a rotation led by left-hander Madison Bumgarner and new addition righty Jeff Samardzija, who was introduced Friday after formalizing his $90 million, five-year contract — one week after the team lost out to the Diamondbacks on Zack Greinke.

Cueto's deal was pending a physical, the team said, and contains a team option for 2022. He is likely to be introduced later this week at AT&T Park. Under the agreement, Cueto can opt out after the 2017 season and become a free agent again. A 29-year-old right-hander, Cueto went 11-13 with a 3.44 ERA in 32 starts for Cincinnati and Kansas City, which acquired him in a trade July 26. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Johnny Cueto GETTY IMAGES

Bernier rewarded for embracing demotion

NHL

Leafs goalie recalled after finding form with Marlies

He was able to go down there and regain his form. He'll start and give himself an opportunity. Mike Babcock on Bernier

Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock answered one big question about his goaltending — Jonathan Bernier will start Tuesday night against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

But there is a second, perhaps bigger question in play: When will James Reimer return? "That's a great question," said Babcock. "If I had (the answer) I'd tell you."

Reimer, who has emerged this season as the team's top goalie, is nursing a sore groin. He hurt it in practice Nov. 24, came back for one game in Minnesota nine days later but hasn't played since. He has worked out prior to practices but hasn't taken part in practice facing pucks.

"Anytime we have anything with a groin, I tell you it's 10 days," said Babcock. "We have all these . . . doctors and we go through the scientific approach.

"Now the approach we used last time didn't work good enough. I guarantee it's taking more time this time. Why? Because if you're the guy in charge you're scared to death to get him out there even though he tells you he's ready to go."

So for now, the net belongs to Bernier, who'll be backed up by rookie Garret Sparks. Bernier went 3-1-0 with the Marlies with three shutouts.

"He was able to do down there and regain his form," said Babcock. "He'll start and give himself an opportunity, that's what it's all about. We need everybody playing the best they can be. Here's the opportunity the guy is looking for."

For Bernier, the trip wasn't only about regaining his form. It was a reminder of how good NHLers have it — with chartered planes and chef-planned meals, compared to AHLers who ride the buses.

"We're pretty fortunate to be in this league," said Bernier. "You go down there and you realize how lucky you are to play in the NHL.

"When you're on a six, seven-hour trip, you're with the guys a lot longer than the NHL. It was fun. It is definitely more casual, there's a lot less pressure. At the end of the day, when you come back up, you just have to say to yourself it's still just a hockey game."

Bernier looked shaky in his 5-4 loss on Sunday at Ricoh Coliseum with Babcock and other members of Leafs brass looking on. But as far as Bernier was concerned, it was mission accomplished.

Jonathan Bernier had three shutouts in four game for the Marlies TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"I thought my best game was Friday (a 2-0 win)," said Bernier. "It was a good four games. Any time you get some shutouts and some wins, you always feel good."

While two dozen or so media members surrounded Bernier in the Leafs' locker room, Sparks sat in full gear waiting and watching. He couldn't get his spot beside Bernier because of all the microphones. However, he remains in 'just-happy-to-be here' mode.

"Every day I show up I try to be the best version of myself I can," said Sparks. "Push guys in practice, compete and show that I want to be here."

Babcock said he saw what he was looking for in Bernier's game. "The first thing I want to see is I want you to go down there and treat the other people right and show leadership," said Babcock. "You're an NHL guy. It's an opportunity to go down and help those kids. So go do that.

"And then find your game and come up and play good. Our job as coaches is to maximize everyone's skill-set. In saying that, you're obligation as a player is to make sure you're ready to go mentally and physically. We're in a competitive league. There are only 23 jobs. You have to grab hold of one of them." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Leicester continue to surprise by beating troubled Blues to go top

English football's most lethal double act propelled Leicester to a 2-1 win over stumbling champion Chelsea in the Premier League on Monday, with goals by Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez keeping their team top of the standings.

The most remarkable Premier League story in years shows no sign of ending. After only narrowly avoiding relegation last campaign, Leicester leads the league by two points.

Free-scoring Vardy put Leicester ahead in the 34th minute. Mahrez scored the second in the 48th with a curling shot. Loic Remy reduced the deficit for Chelsea, which is amazingly just one point from safety. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oshie double lifts Caps to win over Penguins on Sullivan's coaching debut

T.J. Oshie scored twice and added an assist as the Washington Capitals spoiled Mike Sullivan's head coaching debut for the Pittsburgh Penguins in a 4-1 win on Monday night.

Nicklas Backstrom had a goal and two assists for Washington. John Carlson added his fifth goal of the season for the Metropolitan Division leaders. Braden Holtby stopped 44 of Pittsburgh's season-high 45 shots THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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RECIPE Slow Cooker Butter Chicken

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

A dreamy version of the traditional Indian dish using healthy coconut oil instead of butter.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 6 hours
Serves 6

Ingredients
- 2 lb chicken thighs or breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 147 ml tube of tomato paste
- 1 heaping Tbsp curry
- 1 400 ml can coconut milk
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp coconut oil
- Small handful of cilantro for garnish

Directions
1. Put everything in the slow cooker and stir it all around.
2. Close the lid. Set the timer for 6 hours. Don't worry if you need to be away from home for 8 hours or longer — it will be okay.
3. Serve with a big spoonful of jasmine rice and a sprinkling of cilantro.

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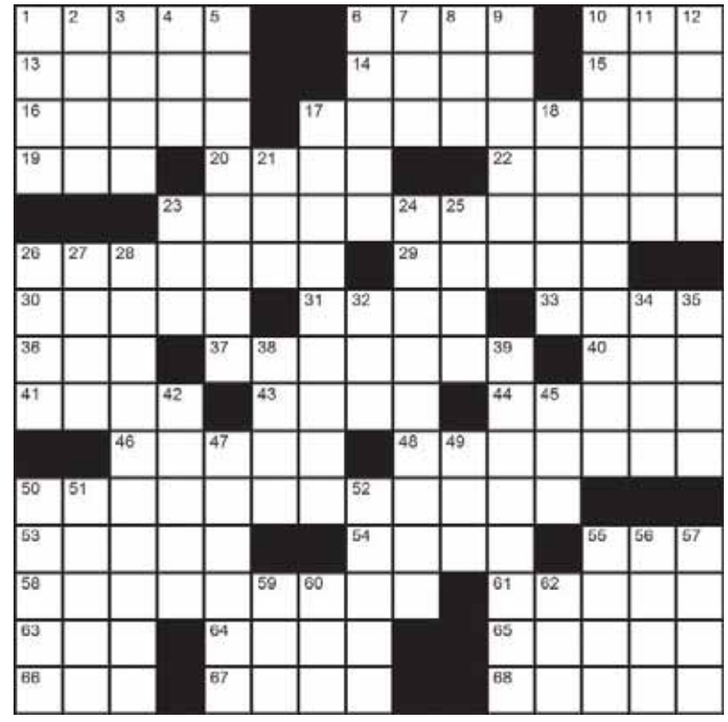
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Cook the broccoli
6. Actor Jared
10. Bar serving
13. Red Hot __ Peppers
14. Architect Mr. Saarinen
15. 'Passion' suffix
16. Paddled
17. Vancouver's province denizen, British __
19. Suit part
20. Intend
22. "Doctor Zhivago" (1965) character
23. Song from Leonard Cohen's 2014 'Popular Problems' album that goes "But I was taken out of Egypt / I was bound to a burden...": 3 wds.
26. Mr. Hall of TV talk
29. Buddy of "The Beverly Hillbillies"
30. __ Ste. Marie, ON
31. Coat the highway
33. Increases twofold, for short
36. Baby dog
37. Cobblers, at times
40. 'King' of France
41. Winter hill ride
43. A __ _ (Record company division)
44. Take away weapons
46. Steal, archaically
48. Canadian comic actor Rick
50. Foothills of The Rockies destination in BC known for dinosaur tracks: 2 wds.
53. Has __ __ (Is able to escape)
54. "Dedicated to the __ _ Love" by The Shirelles
55. "Huh...?"
58. Hockey: Sidney Crosby's nickname: 3 wds.
61. Someone sympathetic
63. Hot season in Montreal
64. Crossed out
65. Stave off
66. Hotdog's li'l topping
67. Off-road rides, commonly
68. Loans

DOWN
1. Glaswegian
2. Popular cuisine
3. Ireland
4. Bitter __
5. 15th or 16th on Salt Lake City's state, variantly
12. Ms. Suvari's
17. Kitchen gadget: 2 wds.
18. Blatted
21. Verdi aria: "__ Tu"
23. Opera singing style, __ canto
24. Leonard Cohen song (from the album at #23-Across) which is the theme tune of the most recent season of HBO's "True Detective"
25. Trucker-to-trucker talker
26. Some slitherers
27. Mr. Julia
28. Linda Evangelista, for one
32. Municipal council member, e.g.
34. Ms. Loughlin
35. A famous Molly
38. Icicle holder
39. __ mask (Operating room necessity)
42. Launch
45. Hebrides 'no'
47. Tennis legend Ms. Gibson
49. Keats specialty
50. Electroshock-er
51. Amalgamate
52. Banned-in-sports substances, slang-style
55. Small songbird
56. Farm group
57. Mr. Linkletter's
59. __. number
60. Mr. Bacon, briefly
62. Street sort, shortly
6. A famous Tea
7. Conger, for one
8. __-Paz (Canadian Hip Hop group)
9. Pizazzes
10. Kellogg's cereal with 'Two Scoops!': 2 wds.
11. Someone from calendars

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
You seem more easy-going and that's good. However, where money is concerned you cannot afford to be too laid-back or you will attract hangers-on and spongers and find yourself out of pocket. Watch your cashflow.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Partnership matters will go smoothly after the upsets and upheavals of recent weeks. You are a lot less competitive, and a lot more relaxed, in one-to-one situations.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Cosmic activity in your opposite sign of Sagittarius will remind you that you cannot always be top dog. If you want to get things done you must be ready to work with others.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Avoid stressful situations, especially if you are the kind of Cancer who gets upset when things go wrong. Nothing can be allowed to put your health at risk.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Raise your sights and show the world what you are capable of. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by trivial things, and don't try to be all things to all people.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Others may complain that nothing is happening but life is what you make of it and you are determined to make something really good. Show all the moaning minnies what a positive attitude can accomplish!

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Do you carry on along your present course or do you change direction and try something different? It might help to talk it over with friends and family. They can see your situation from a less personal perspective.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You need to take your cashflow situation more seriously than you have been. If resources are low then there are only two ways to build them up again: spend less or earn more.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Don't be scared to take a few chances and try your hand at something new. Leave your comfort zone and accomplish something truly worthwhile.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
If you do a good deed today you will be rewarded for it in the future. You would do it anyway even if you knew you would get nothing out of it — that's the kind of person you are!

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
What's coming into your life may seem like something you haven't earned but that's the wrong way to look at it. If you're being favoured it's because you have done something in the past that has helped others.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
Flattery will take you a long way, but hard work will take you further. Cosmic activity in and around the career area of your chart makes it easy to impress with ideas and enthusiasm.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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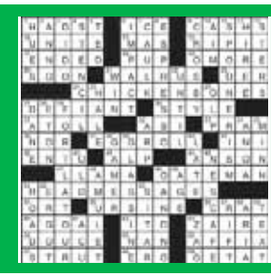

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